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CAREX OCCIDENTALIS **WESTERN SEDGE**

Western Sedge is a grass-like perennial forming loose bunches with flowering stems that are sharply triangular, up to 80 cm tall, and arising from short, creeping rootstocks. Leaves are flat with inrolled margins and 1-3 mm wide. The inflorescence consists of 4-10 spikes, tightly clustered towards the top but more remote at the bottom; each spike is oblong and 15-30 mm long with inconspicuous male flowers at the top. The green to straw-colored perigynia point upward in the spike; they are oblong-elliptic, 2-5 mm long, and mostly concealed by the brownish, ovate-triangular scales that have a white margin and a green center. Each perigynium has 2 stigmas and an achene that is lens-shaped, nearly filling the body. Flowering and fruiting in June-July.

The bunch-forming growth form, elongate heads and elliptic perigynia are among the more diagnostic characteristics of this species among upland CAREX. A hand lens or microscope and technical key are needed for positive identification.